

**Management Advisory Report: Message
Paging Could Enhance the Communication of
Time-Sensitive Information Throughout the
Toll-Free Telephone Enterprise**

September 2001

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This report has cleared the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration disclosure review process and information determined to be restricted from public release has been redacted from this document.



DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

INSPECTOR GENERAL
for TAX
ADMINISTRATION

September 20, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMISSIONER, WAGE AND INVESTMENT DIVISION

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Pamela J. Gardiner".

FROM: Pamela J. Gardiner
Deputy Inspector General for Audit

SUBJECT: Final Management Advisory Report - Message Paging Could Enhance the Communication of Time-Sensitive Information Throughout the Toll-Free Telephone Enterprise

The report presents the results of our review of the effectiveness of time-sensitive communications between the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) Joint Operations Center (JOC) and its 26 geographically dispersed toll-free call centers. The IRS established the JOC in Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 to centrally manage the toll-free telephone enterprise as a single "virtual"¹ call center. We conducted this review because effective communications between the JOC and each of the call centers is critical for promptly reacting to time-sensitive issues, such as unscheduled call demand, inclement weather, and software and hardware problems that can affect the level of service² provided to taxpayers.

In summary, we found the JOC effectively uses Intranet³ advisories, ad hoc telephone contacts, and regularly scheduled daily and weekly conference calls to communicate information across the toll-free telephone enterprise. Overall, 78 percent of the call

¹ A virtual call center is an approach to enterprise-wide call center management that treats several geographically dispersed call centers as if they were a single call center.

² Level of service is the relative success rate of taxpayers who are calling for toll-free telephone services. The IRS computes level of service by dividing "total calls answered" by "total call attempts."

³ The Intranet is the IRS' in-house web site that serves the employees of the enterprise. An Intranet is not a site accessed externally by the general public.

center managers, systems analysts, and systems administrators that responded to our questionnaire were highly or moderately satisfied with the communication of time-sensitive information between the JOC and its call centers.

The JOC has developed a Web site⁴ on the IRS Intranet as a tool for communicating issues regarding the IRS' toll-free telephone enterprise. The Critical Issues & Updates Web page was established on this site as the primary means of communicating time-sensitive information to the 26 call centers. While the Intranet is a convenient tool for simultaneously and consistently disseminating information to a large number of geographically dispersed call centers, its use requires continuous access to an IRS network monitor. For that reason, the JOC may not always have sufficient assurance that critical information is immediately received and acted on. For example, 61 percent of the respondents to our questionnaire indicated that they checked the Critical Issues & Updates Web page 2 or less times per day. In addition, 47 percent of the respondents expressed concern that critical, time-sensitive information communicated on the Intranet may not always receive a timely response. Only 25 percent of the respondents indicated that the Intranet was their preferred method of receiving communications from the JOC.

Management's Response: The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, agreed with our recommendation and will review the options available for implementing message paging within the IRS' budget. Management's complete response to the draft report is included as Appendix V.

Copies of this report are also being sent to the IRS managers who are affected by the report recommendation. Please contact me at (202) 622-6510 if you have questions or Gordon C. Milbourn III, Assistant Inspector General for Audit (Small Business and Corporate Programs), at (202) 622-3837.

⁴ A server that contains Web pages and other files which is online 24 hours a day.

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Background

During Calendar Year 2000, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) received 131 million calls¹ on its toll-free telephone lines from taxpayers needing information or assistance with filing their returns or paying their taxes. The IRS deals with perhaps the largest peak demand of any call center operation in existence, since the majority of the calls are received during the first 3½ months of each calendar year, which is the filing season for individual taxpayers. As a result, the IRS generally struggles to effectively meet the customer demand placed on the toll-free telephone system during the filing season. Millions of taxpayers encounter busy signals or long waiting times. Many taxpayers who encounter long waiting times abandon their calls before speaking with an IRS agent.

In recent years, the IRS has implemented a number of fundamental management changes and technological improvements in an effort to achieve its goal of delivering top quality telephone service. One of these changes was the establishment of the Joint Operations Center (JOC) in Atlanta, Georgia, in Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 to centralize the management of the toll-free telephone enterprise. The JOC uses a national call routing system and other technology to link the IRS' 26 geographically dispersed call centers into a single "virtual"² call center in which each call is routed to the next available agent regardless of where the agent is located.

Effective communications between the JOC and each of the call centers is critical for promptly reacting to time-sensitive issues, such as unscheduled call demand, inclement weather, and software and hardware problems that can affect the level of service³ provided to taxpayers. The JOC employs a

¹ Total calls received includes calls answered, busy signals, and abandoned calls (hang-ups).

² A virtual call center is an approach to enterprise-wide call center management that treats several geographically dispersed call centers as if they were a single call center.

³ Level of service is the relative success rate of taxpayers who are calling for toll-free telephone services. The IRS computes level of service by dividing "total calls answered" by "total call attempts."

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Routing Team that monitors call distribution and staffing delivery on a real-time, 24-hours-per-day basis. The Routing Team coordinates with the systems analysts at the 26 call centers. The systems analysts also monitor equipment at their respective call center for call processing problems and for calls that are held up in the queue.⁴

This review supports the FY 2001 emphasis area of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration to evaluate whether the IRS is providing quality customer service operations. We performed this review between January and June 2001 at the JOC in Atlanta, Georgia, and at the IRS' call center in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition, to assist our evaluation of the techniques used to communicate time-sensitive issues between the JOC and the call centers, we distributed questionnaires to call center managers, systems analysts, and systems administrators at each of the IRS' 26 call centers. We also visited the call center operations at the Social Security Administration in Baltimore, Maryland; the Prudential Insurance Company of America in Roseland, New Jersey; and Delta Airlines in Atlanta, Georgia.

The review was performed in accordance with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspections*. Detailed information on our review objective, scope, and methodology is presented in Appendix I. Major contributors to the report are listed in Appendix II.

⁴ The queue is a holding place for calls while waiting for an agent to become available to answer them.

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Time-Sensitive Issues Are Communicated Effectively Throughout the Toll-Free Telephone Enterprise

The JOC effectively uses Intranet⁵ advisories, ad hoc telephone contacts, and regularly scheduled daily and weekly conference calls to communicate information across the toll-free telephone enterprise. Overall, 78 percent⁶ of the respondents to our questionnaire were highly or moderately satisfied with the communication of time-sensitive information between the JOC and its call centers.

Intranet communications

The JOC has developed a Web site⁷ on the IRS Intranet as a tool for communicating information throughout the toll-free telephone enterprise. The Critical Issues & Updates Web page was established on this site as the primary means to simultaneously disseminate time-sensitive information to all 26 call centers. The JOC also uses a “Daily Operations Log” Web page for recording significant issues affecting the toll-free telephone enterprise and specific call centers that are identified by call center analysts, vendors, or JOC personnel. In March 2001, the JOC established a “Trouble Ticket Control System” on the Intranet to help ensure that problems the call centers identify and report to the JOC are appropriately resolved.

Sixty-one percent of the respondents to our questionnaire were highly or moderately satisfied with the effectiveness of the Intranet for communicating time-sensitive issues. Only 22 percent of the respondents were highly or moderately dissatisfied with Intranet communications.

The responses to other related questions showed that:

- Ninety-three percent of the respondents were highly or moderately satisfied with their ability to access the JOC web site.

⁵ The Intranet is the IRS’ in-house web site that serves the employees of the enterprise. An Intranet is not a site accessed externally by the general public.

⁶ Questions that were unanswered or answered as “Not Applicable” are not included in the percentage calculations presented in this report.

⁷ A server that contains Web pages and other files which is online 24 hours a day.

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- Sixty-three percent of the respondents were highly or moderately satisfied with their ability to comply with directives communicated on the Critical Issues & Updates Web page.
- Sixty-six percent of the respondents were highly or moderately satisfied with the Daily Operations Log for presenting issues affecting the call centers.

The following excerpt from one of the questionnaire responses was typical of the positive feedback we received on the effectiveness of Intranet communications:

There is less chance for misunderstanding when communication is made in writing. The frequent Web page updates allow all sites to see what issues are arising in other sites and often saves [sic] time spent troubleshooting a problem that may have already been resolved elsewhere. Web postings ensure that all sites get the same information at the same time.

We analyzed all of the issues recorded in the Daily Operations Log for a 6-day period, all of the open Trouble Ticket Reports, and a judgmental sample of the closed Trouble Ticket Reports on the JOC web site. We determined that the JOC took timely and effective action to resolve call center issues. Our questionnaire feedback also supported that the JOC was very responsive to problems and issues reported by the call centers. Employees advised us of very few examples of situations where the call centers needed to make repeated follow-up contacts with the JOC to resolve issues.

Telephone communications

Systems analysts at the call centers use the telephone to alert the JOC of specific call center concerns. The JOC records these issues in the Daily Operations Log and is responsible for providing solutions or following up with the contractors to work on solutions. Issues recorded in the Daily Operations Log that are not closed the same day the problem is reported are generally discussed during daily conference calls that JOC management holds with JOC Representatives from the Wage and Investment and Small Business/Self-Employed

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Divisions. The daily conference calls also include a discussion of the prior day's enterprise performance information and other issues. In addition, the JOC holds a weekly conference call with representatives from all 26 call centers to discuss weekly enterprise performance information, present new issues, and follow up on previously unresolved issues.

Overall, 76 percent of the respondents to our questionnaire were highly or moderately satisfied with the effectiveness of the telephone as a means for communicating time-sensitive issues with the JOC. Only 7 percent of the respondents were highly or moderately dissatisfied with telephone communications.

The responses to other related questions showed that:

- Eighty percent of the respondents indicated a high or moderate level of understanding about the types of issues to raise about their call center in a conference call forum.
- Sixty-two percent of the respondents were highly or moderately comfortable with raising issues about their call center during the weekly conference calls.

Message Paging Could Further Enhance Time-Sensitive Communications With the Call Centers

The Intranet is a convenient tool for simultaneously and consistently disseminating information to a large number of geographically dispersed call centers. However, we are concerned that its use does not provide sufficient assurance to the JOC that the information is immediately received and acted on.

The effectiveness of the IRS' Intranet as a time-sensitive communications medium is dependent on the call center managers and systems analysts having continuous access to an IRS network monitor. However, the day-to-day duties and responsibilities of the call center managers and analysts often prevent them from monitoring the Intranet on a continuous basis. The JOC Web pages must also be

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“refreshed”⁸ on a continuous basis in order to receive updates of the most current information posted to the site.

Therefore, critical, time-sensitive communications from the JOC that may require immediate action by the call centers to restore or improve the level of telephone service are at risk of going unnoticed for relatively long periods of time. For example, 61 percent of the respondents to our questionnaire indicated that they check the Critical Issues & Updates Web page 2 or less times per day. This means that, at some call centers, 4 hours or longer may elapse without the Intranet being checked for critical directives from the JOC.

In answering 1 or more questions on our survey, 47 percent of the respondents expressed concern that critical, time-sensitive information communicated on the Intranet may not always receive a timely response. Only 25 percent of the respondents indicated that the Intranet was their preferred method of receiving communications from the JOC. Many respondents suggested that an alternative to the Intranet, such as the telephone, pagers, or e-mail, should be used for notifying the call centers about time-sensitive issues.

The following excerpts from the questionnaire responses provide examples of the concerns expressed regarding the use of the Intranet to communicate critical, time-sensitive information to the call centers:

- *The WebSite [sic] is updated constantly through out [sic] the day. We do not monitor it that closely. Communications of time sensitive issues should be sent via e-mail, particularly if an immediate response is required.*
- *As an SA,⁹ I am constantly involved in a multitude of tasks throughout the day and find it impractical and inconvenient to continuously check new information that may appear on the web. If there is a time sensitive issue*

⁸ Refresh is an Internet browser feature that allows users to ensure they are viewing the latest version of a Web page.

⁹ SA stands for systems analyst.

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that needs immediate action, JOC should call the site directly and speak to the SA concerning the urgency of the issue.

- *Sometimes it might be more efficient to make telephone contact with a site, especially when actions need to be taken within a short time frame for example, less than one hour.*
- *System Analysts [sic] staffs are usually only comprised of a few employees. JOC should try to reach sites by phone or beeper for crucial situations.*

We did not determine why the IRS has not employed instant point-of-contact communication devices for critical, time-sensitive communications.

Call center operations in the private sector rely on message paging as the primary means to communicate critical, time-sensitive information

A “best practice” identified at both of the private-sector companies we visited was the use of message paging as the key communications channel for time-sensitive information across the toll-free telephone enterprise. Both organizations used paging services to provide essential, time-sensitive information on conditions affecting the toll-free telephone enterprise; to continuously communicate enterprise-level data about the service level being provided to customers; and to alert employees of potential problems affecting the call centers and the actions that needed to be performed immediately.

Pager messaging allows employees to be mobile without being limited to a desktop system. Messaging allows contacts to get messages to users in several different ways. Contacts may call a toll-free number to send a numeric message, use a vendor’s Web page to compose and send text messages, or send e-mail from a personal computer via most standard e-mail software. Contacts can also leave voice messages that the user can retrieve by calling a toll-free number after notification by the pager.

One of the companies we visited used an interactive paging service. Interactive paging allows users to originate

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messages and e-mail directly from a pager. Using an on-screen keyboard or built-in keyboard, the user can respond or create new messages, even to contacts that do not have pagers.

The management officials at this company viewed the interactive paging service as a valuable tool in managing their virtual call center. The central operations center used e-mail to quickly disseminate critical information among key toll-free operations staff. Interactive paging allowed the toll-free operations management and staff to receive and immediately respond to these e-mail messages directly from the pager, regardless of their location. The operations center also sent enterprise-wide service level updates over the paging service every 2 hours.

Paging services are available to the IRS for purchase or lease from several vendors under the General Service Administration's Federal Technology Service contracts. The monthly lease costs range from \$30 to \$150 per unit depending on the type of paging service (e.g., one-way¹⁰ or interactive) and the capacity (e.g., number of characters) of the unit.

Recommendation

1. The Director, Customer Account Services, could enhance the communication of time-sensitive information by procuring or leasing message paging services for the key personnel at the JOC and the call centers who are responsible for monitoring and maintaining the performance of the IRS' toll-free telephone enterprise.

¹⁰ One-way paging allows the user to receive text messages, but the user cannot create or send a response message.

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Management's Response: The Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division, agreed with our recommendation and will review the options available for implementing message paging within the IRS' budget.

Detailed Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of our review was to evaluate the effectiveness of time-sensitive communications between the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) Joint Operations Center (JOC) and its 26 geographically dispersed toll-free call centers.

To meet this objective, we:

- I. Evaluated the current techniques of JOC Web site usage, direct telephone contact, and conference calls that the JOC and the call centers were using in providing time-sensitive communications.
 - A. Reviewed documentation and interviewed managers, program analysts, and systems analysts in the JOC and the Cleveland, Ohio, call center to determine the preferred communication techniques for different types of time-sensitive issues.
 - B. Identified situations where the JOC requested time-sensitive action by the call center.
 1. Determined the method of communication used to notify the call centers.
 2. Identified the JOC's process for monitoring whether the call centers responded to Intranet directives.
 - C. Identified situations where the call centers identified issues requiring time-sensitive action by the JOC.
 1. Determined the method of communication used to notify the JOC.
 2. Determined whether the JOC took timely and effective action by reviewing the responsiveness to all 70 issues recorded on the Daily Operations Log for a judgmentally selected¹ 6-day period from November 29 through December 4, 2000.
 3. Determined whether effective actions were taken by reviewing all 20 Trouble Tickets that were open as of May 23, 2001, and by reviewing a judgmental sample of 15 of the 792 closed Trouble Tickets.
 - D. Sent 149 questionnaires to all division-level management officials, systems analysts, and systems administrators at the 26 call centers to obtain their feedback on the effectiveness of communications and solicit their suggestions for

¹ For steps I.C.2 and 3, we judgmentally selected our samples because we did not plan to statistically project our findings to the universes involved.

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improving communications. We received a total of 70 responses from 24 of the 26 call centers. We evaluated the 70 responses to:

1. Identify the primary methods of communicating with the JOC.
2. Determine the specific types of situations where it was necessary to contact the JOC.
3. Evaluate the frequency of contacts from February 2000 through January 2001.
4. Determine their level of satisfaction with their communications with the JOC.

- II. Identified and evaluated the time-sensitive communication techniques that are used by private-sector businesses and another government agency with large call center operations.
 - A. Researched the Internet and other sources to identify private-sector businesses and government agencies that are recognized as successfully managing large call center operations.
 - B. Visited and interviewed management officials at the Prudential Insurance Company of America, Delta Airlines, and the Social Security Administration to:
 1. Determine the communication techniques they use and how the management officials value their usefulness in providing time-sensitive communications.
 2. Identify new, innovative methods used in time-sensitive communications.
 3. Determine the costs to develop and maintain the new communication techniques.
 - C. Evaluated whether the communication techniques used by businesses or the government agency would be beneficial in an IRS call center environment.

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Appendix II

Major Contributors to This Report

Gordon C. Milbourn III, Assistant Inspector General for Audit (Small Business and Corporate Programs)

Philip Shropshire, Director

William E. Stewart, Audit Manager

John W. Baxter, Senior Auditor

Robert A. Nicely, Senior Auditor

James E. Wellman, Auditor

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Appendix III

Report Distribution List

Commissioner N:C
Deputy Commissioner N:DC
Commissioner, Small Business/Self-Employed Division S
Deputy Commissioner, Small Business/Self-Employed Division S
Deputy Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division W
Director, Customer Account Services, Small Business/Self-Employed Division S:CAS
Director, Customer Account Services, Wage and Investment Division W:CAS
Director, Joint Operations Center, Wage and Investment Division W:CAS:JOC
Director, Office of Program Evaluation and Risk Analysis N:ADC:R:O
Chief Counsel CC
National Taxpayer Advocate TA
Office of Management Controls N:CFO:F:M
Director, Legislative Affairs CL:LA
Audit Liaisons:
 Commissioner, Small Business/Self-Employed Division S
 Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division W
 Director, Customer Account Services, Small Business/Self-Employed Division S:CAS
 Director, Customer Account Services, Wage and Investment Division W:CAS

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Appendix IV

Questionnaire Distributed to Call Centers



DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20220

February 8, 2001

Response Date:
February 28, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR IRS CALL CENTER MANAGEMENT

FROM: William E. Stewart
Audit Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William E. Stewart".

SUBJECT: Communications Questionnaire

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration is conducting a review of the effectiveness of **time-sensitive** communications between the Joint Operations Center (JOC) and the 26 geographically-dispersed call centers that comprise the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) "virtual" toll-free telephone enterprise. To successfully complete this endeavor, we need the assistance and perspective of each call center.

We are requesting the Toll-Free Division Chiefs, the Planning and Analysis Division Chiefs, and the systems analysts at each of the call centers to complete the attached questionnaire and return it to us by Wednesday, February 28, 2001. The responses may be Emailed to William.Stewart@tigta.treas.gov or faxed to my attention at (513) 263-3050.

Your cooperation and assistance is greatly appreciated. The collective responses from the 26 call centers will help us to provide the Congress and senior-level IRS management with an independent appraisal of a critical aspect of the toll-free telephone operations.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (513) 263-3052 or you may contact Senior Auditor Robert A. Nicely at (513) 263-3042.

Attachment

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CALL CENTER QUESTIONNAIRE

LOCATION OF CALL CENTER : _____

PLEASE IDENTIFY YOUR POSITION:

_____ **TOLL-FREE DIVISION CHIEF**

_____ **PLANNING & ANALYSIS DIVISION CHIEF**

_____ **SYSTEMS ANALYST**

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUESTIONNAIRE:

FOR EACH QUESTION WHERE THERE IS A SELECTION FROM A THROUGH E, PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE SELECTION. PLEASE PROVIDE NARRATIVE EXPLANATIONS OF YOUR ANSWERS WHERE APPROPRIATE.

Intranet Communication

- 1) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of using the Intranet for communicating time-sensitive issues with the staff at the Joint Operations Center (JOC)?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor
dissatisfied

d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

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- 2) Please indicate the specific reports, logs and other data that you access on the JOC WebSite to obtain information on telephone operations and the approximate frequency of these accesses (i.e., several times per day, daily, weekly, other?)

JOC Daily Operations Log	Yes___	No___	Frequency___
Critical Issues and Updates	Yes___	No___	Frequency___
Responses Due to JOC	Yes___	No___	Frequency___
JOC Conference Call	Yes___	No___	Frequency___
Other _____			Frequency___

Comments:

- 3) Please indicate your level of satisfaction with your ability to access the JOC WebSite over the last 12 months. Please describe any problems that may have prevented access to the site and specify whether these problems occurred for extended/limited periods and whether they occurred on a frequent/infrequent basis.

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

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- 4) How would you describe your ability to comply with requests to change operations at your call center that are directed from the JOC Critical Issues & Updates WebSite?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 5) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the "JOC Daily Operations Log" for presenting issues that affect your call center? On occasions where issues affecting your site were not specifically identified in the log, was a site(s) with the same or a similar issue identified in the log instead?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 6) Please provide any suggestions for improving communications from the JOC WebSite. Are there any reports or any additional information that would be helpful to the daily operation of your call center that are presently not available from the site?

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Telephone Communication

- 7) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of using the telephone for communicating time-sensitive issues with the staff at the JOC?

- a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 8) Please describe the specific types of situations where it is necessary to contact the JOC by telephone and indicate the frequency of these communications. (daily, weekly, monthly, other)

- 9) Please describe any situations when it was necessary to follow-up with the JOC on the same issue. Please indicate whether or not these issues were satisfactorily resolved.

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- 10) Over the last 12 months, please describe how often you were unable to contact the JOC by telephone. Please specify whether these problems occurred for extended/limited periods and whether they occurred on a frequent/infrequent basis.

Conference Call Communication

- 11) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the communications provided through the weekly conference calls?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 12) How would you describe your level of understanding about the types of issues to raise about your call center in a conference call forum?

a) High understanding b) Moderate understanding

c) Low understanding d) No understanding

Please explain your answer:

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- 13) How would you describe your level of comfort raising these types of issues in a conference call forum?
- a) Highly comfortable b) Moderately comfortable
- c) Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- d) Moderately uncomfortable e) Highly uncomfortable

Please explain your answer and describe whether you believe that this forum is appropriate for all issues, most issues, a few issues, or whether there is another forum that would be more appropriate.

- 14) For issues/concerns affecting your call center that cannot be resolved immediately during the weekly conference calls, please describe your level of satisfaction with the responsiveness of follow-up solutions provided by the JOC staff?
- a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 15) Please describe the nature of any issues affecting your call center that you feel should not be identified in a conference call forum and explain how these issues should be addressed.

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- 16) Please list any suggestions for improving the weekly conference call sessions.

Email Communications

- 17) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of using email to communicate with the staff at the JOC? (If email is not used to contact the JOC staff, please answer Not Applicable and skip to Question 21.)

- a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 18) Please describe the specific types of situations where it is necessary to contact the JOC by email and indicate the frequency of these communications. (daily, weekly, monthly, other)

- 19) Over the last 12 months, please describe how often you experienced problems where you were unable to contact the JOC by email and specify whether these problems occurred for extended/limited periods and whether they occurred on a frequent/infrequent basis.

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- 20) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the level of responsiveness given by the JOC staff to issues/concerns that were communicated to the JOC using email?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 21) Please list any suggestions for improving/utilizing email communications to/from your call center. Please describe if there is any information that would be helpful to the operation of your call center if it were provided by email rather than another method.

Overall Communication

- 22) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the effectiveness for communicating time-sensitive issues between the JOC and your call site?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

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- 23) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the communications between the JOC Representative (analyst in your Business Operating Division) and your call site?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 24) Please describe the nature of communications with other call centers and indicate the frequency of these communications. (daily, weekly, monthly, other)

- 25) How would you describe your level of satisfaction with the instructions (if any) that you have for contacting the JOC and/or vendors to resolve problem situations?

a) Highly satisfied b) Moderately satisfied c) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
d) Moderately dissatisfied e) Highly dissatisfied

Please explain your answer:

- 26) Of the various methods that are available for receiving communications within the Enterprise, what method is used most frequently by your call center?

a) _____ Intranet b) _____ telephone c) _____ email
d) _____ conference call e) _____ other (specify)

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- 27) Of the various methods that are available for receiving communications within the Enterprise, what method is preferred by your call center?
- a) _____ Intranet b) _____ telephone c) _____ email
d) _____ conference call e) _____ other (specify)
- 28) Of the various methods that are available for sending communications within the Enterprise, what method is used most frequently by your call center?
- a) _____ Intranet b) _____ telephone c) _____ email
d) _____ conference call e) _____ other (specify)
- 29) Of the various methods that are available for sending communications within the Enterprise, what method is preferred by your call center?
- a) _____ Intranet b) _____ telephone c) _____ email
d) _____ conference call e) _____ other (specify)
- 30) Please list any suggestions for improving overall communications between the JOC and the call centers.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 31) Please provide us with the name, title, and telephone number of the person responsible for completing this questionnaire in the event that we need to follow-up to clarify any responses.
- _____
- _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

Management Advisory Report: Message Paging Could Enhance the Communication of Time-Sensitive Information Throughout the Toll-Free Telephone Enterprise

Appendix V

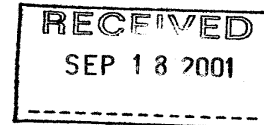
Management's Response to the Draft Report



COMMISSIONER
WAGE AND INVESTMENT DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
ATLANTA, GA 30308

September 13, 2001



MEMORANDUM FOR TREASURY INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR TAX ADMINISTRATION

FROM:

John M. Dalrymple
John M. Dalrymple
Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division

SUBJECT:

Management Advisory Report: Message Paging Could Enhance the Communication of Time-Sensitive Information Throughout the Toll-Free Telephone Enterprise (Reference No. 2001-30-007)

I reviewed your draft report and agree that message paging could further enhance the Joint Operation Center's (JOC) communication process. Your report accurately reflects the complexity of critical and frequent communication that occurs between JOC and its many partners. I am pleased you noted that 78 percent of the call center managers, system analysts, and administrators were highly or moderately satisfied with the communication process. Your report also noted that the JOC took timely and effective action to respond to call center issues reported through the communication process. This validates the value of our efforts and strengthens the process.

The questionnaire developed by your staff has gathered useful information. The JOC management team found the feedback your staff shared from the questionnaire insightful. They plan to use this information to further refine their communication efforts.

RECOMMENDATION

The Director, Customer Account Services, could enhance the communication of time-sensitive information by procuring or leasing message paging services for key personnel at the JOC and the call centers responsible for monitoring and maintaining the performance of the IRS' toll-free telephone enterprise.

ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE

A "best practice" identified in the private sector was using message paging as a key communication channel for time sensitive information. Pager messaging allows employees to be mobile without being limited to a desktop system.

Management Advisory Report: Message Paging Could Enhance the Communication of Time-Sensitive Information Throughout the Toll-Free Telephone Enterprise

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CORRECTIVE ACTION

We agree with this recommendation and will review the options available for implementing message paging within our budget.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE:

January 1, 2002

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS

Director, Joint Operations Center
Director, Customer Account Services
Commissioner, Wage and Investment Division

If you have any questions, please call me or members of your staff can contact Ron Watson, Director, Customer Account Services, at (404) 338-8910.